DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 415 817 HE 030 968

AUTHOR Janes, Sharyn
TITLE Experiences of African-American Baccalaureate Nursing Students Examined through the Lenses of Tinto's Student Retention Theory and Astin's Student Involvement Theory. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE 1997-11-06
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (22nd, Albuquerque, NM, November 6-9, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; Bachelors Degrees; Black Colleges; *Black Students; *College Graduates; Graduate Surveys; Higher Education; *Nursing Education; *School Holding Power; Student Attitudes; Student College Relationship; *Student Participation; Theories
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; *ASHE Annual Meeting; Astin (Alexander W); Tinto Model

ABSTRACT

African-American nurses' perceptions of their baccalaureate nursing school experiences were examined in relation to Vincent Tinto's (1987) theory of student retention and Astin's theory of student involvement. In-depth interviews were conducted with four graduates of a predominantly black southeastern university and four graduates of a predominantly white southeastern university. Individual commitment to degree completion was a major factor in persistence. Respondents generally perceived the black campus as comfortable, warm, and nurturing, while they tended to perceive the white campus as cold and uncaring. Satisfaction with the academic experience was related to a combination of factors, including self-esteem, relationships with other students, and pride in the university. Positive role modes were important for respondents for personal and professional guidance and increased self-esteem. All of the participants worked off-campus at some time during college, which supports Astin's proposal that working off-campus, as long as it is less than 25 hours a week, is instrumental in promoting student persistence. Financial aid was identified as a major component of student persistence, which supports Astin's theory but contradicts Tinto's assertion that finances are not a major factor in degree completion. Except for assumptions regarding financial aid, findings corroborated Tinto's theory. (Contains 64 references.) (SW)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 415 817

# Experiences of African-American Baccalaureate Nursing Students Examined Through the Lenses of Tinto's Student Retention Theory and Astin's Student Involvement Theory

Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference

Albuquerque, NM

November 1997

by

Sharyn Janes, Ph.D., R.N.

Associate Professor

University of Southern Mississippi

Hattiesburg, MS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HE 030 968

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ASHE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ASHE

ASSOCIATION
FOR THE
STUDY OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

Texas A&M University
Department of Educational
Administration
College Station, TX 77843
(409) 845-0393

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 6-9, 1997. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Experiences of African-American Baccalaureate Nursing Students Examined Through the Lenses of Tinto's Student Retention Theory and Astin's Student Involvement Theory

Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference

Albuquerque, NM

November 1997

by

Sharyn Janes, Ph.D., R.N.

Associate Professor

University of Southern Mississippi

Hattiesburg, MS

In 1990, ethnic minority groups made up 25 percent of the American population (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1992). The total minority population is expected to increase 2.6 percent per year during the decade of the nineties resulting in an estimated minority population of 28.4 percent by 2000 ( U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994). This is especially significant for nurses since minority populations are overrepresented in health probelem areas and underrepresented in the nursing profession (Rosella, Regan-Kubinski, & Albrecht, 1994). Although African-Americans comprise 12.1 percent of the general population, only 7.1 percent of registered nurses are African-American (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the census, 1992).

According to Sallie Tucker-Allen (1989), a minority student is a rarity in a school of nursing. The number of minority students being admitted to schools of nursing is not in proportion to the number of minorities in the general population; when minority students are admitted to schools of nursing, a substantial number are failing to enroll in the required nursing courses; and a significant number of those enrolling in the nursing courses are failing to graduate. Although nurse educators are recognizing the need for recruiting and

graduating minority students (American Academy of Nursing, 1992), registered nursing student enrollment for African-Americans was 8.7 percent in 1993 with graduation rates even lower at 6.8 percent (National League for Nursing, 1994).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to seek corroboration for propositions about African-American student persistence in higher education as posed by Tinto's (1985, 1986, 1987) student retention theory and Astin's (1975, 1977, 1984) student involvement theory. These propositions include such factors as social integration, academic integration, financial aid, and student involvement. The investigation focused on the following questions:

(1) Do the factors related to persistence as perceived by African-American baccalaureate nursing graduates corroborate selected propositions of Tinto's theory of student retention and Astin's theory of student involvement?

(2) (a) Is there a difference between the perceptions of the barriers to persistence and patterns of involvement experienced by African-American students at a predominantly black school of nursing and the perceptions of the barriers to persistence and patterns of involvement experienced by African-American students at a predominantly white school of nursing? (b) Are any of these differences associated with the personal, family, socioeconomic, and/or academic backgrounds of African-American baccalaureate nursing students?

## Significance of the Study

Tinto (1975, 1982) states that more research is needed to evaluate the relationship between race and dropout from higher education. According to Kathleen Boyle (1986), numerous authors and researchers have suggested that attention must be given to retention of minority nursing students in order to increase the pool of minority nurses. Recent

research has suggested that effective programs are those that are able to integrate students into the mainstream of the academic and social life of the college or university (Kavanaugh, K.H., Kennedy, P.H., Kohler, H.R., Rasin, J.H., & Schoen, D.C.; Campbell, A.R., & Davis, S.M., 1996; Dowell, 1996).

Tinto (1982), Smith and Allen (1984), and Donovan (1984) recommend that further research should be conducted that make different types of comparisons such as black student attrition in black versus white institutions. Astin (1975) suggests that certain groups of students, such as women, blacks, etc., might display involvement in different ways. He indicates that further research is needed to examine student involvement in relation to these diverse student groups.

This study attempted to fill the gaps in existing research by comparing the experiences of African-American nursing students on predominantly white college campuses with the experiences of African-American nursing students on predominantly black college campuses. Perceived barriers to graduation were explored which could have an effect on future educational policy.

African-American professional nurses' perceptions of their nursing school experiences were examined in relation to Tinto's theory of student retention and Astin's theory of student involvement. The findings provide educators and policy-makers with additional information to address the problem of high attrition rates for African-American baccalaureate nursing students. Positive and negative factors were identified which contribute to African-American nursing student retention or attrition as perceived by students who have successfully completed their baccalaureate programs.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included both the student retention theory of Vincent Tinto (1985, 1986, 1987) and the student involvement theory of Alexander Astin (1975, 1977, 1984). Tinto's theory, which focuses on the interactional view of student departure from higher education, is perhaps the most widely accepted and

cited theory of student retention (Benda, 1991; Rosenfeld, 1988; Terenzini, Pascarella, Theophilides, & Lorang, 1985; Voorhees, 1985; Getzlaf, Sedlacek, Kearney, & Blackwell, 1984).

Tinto (1987) contends that institutional climate is as important to student retention as academic or financial factors. In fact, student integration into the academic and social life of the campus is more predictive of retention than any other factor. Student departure reflects individual experiences in the total culture of an institution, both formal and informal, and the meaning that individuals attach to these experiences.

According to Astin (1984), the factors that contribute to student retention suggest involvement and the factors that contribute to student attrition suggest a lack of involvement. He states, "Student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. Involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel" (p. 307).

This research was conducted using naturalistic inquiry. Tinto (1986) suggests that the research agenda for student retention must include more qualitative studies to contribute to the further development of theory. The development of a complete grounded theory of student retention requires an explanation of the perceived experiences of different student groups, such as minority students, in varying institutional settings. Future theory must be able to relate the quality of student effort and involvement to student retention.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were related to the qualitative research paradigm. One limitation was potential researcher bias, which is the possibility that the researcher may have interpreted the data according to her own perceptions rather than the perceptions of the participants (Bryman, 1988). Another limitation was that the prior

specification of a theoretical framework may have colored the outcome of the study because theory can shape observation (Bryman, 1988; Firestone, 1990). A third limitation was the lack of generalizability (reliability) of the findings to other students or institutions. One reason for this is that the in depth interviewing technique used limited the number of research participants because of time constraints.

## Review of the Literature

Over the last two decades the recruitment, retention, and graduation of African-American students has been a major concern for colleges and universities ( Ginsberg & Bennett, 1989; Green, 1989; Stewart, 1988; Jones, 1987). The limited amount of literature available that addresses African-American student recruitment and retention problems in nursing states that nursing has not even kept pace with the low numbers of black students in higher education overall.

There is little information available in the literature that relates African-American nursing students' personal, socioeconomic, or academic characteristics to persistence, however, inadequate academic and social integration and inadequate financial aid are repeatedly identified as major barriers to minority student retention in general higher education.

### White Campuses

A large portion of the literature concerning minorities in higher education addresses the problems faced by minority students, particularly African-American students, in predominantly white colleges or universities. Although some researchers contend that the racial composition of the institution attended has no influence on whether a African-American student completes a bachelor's degree (Pascarella, 1985), the majority of the literature reveals that African-American students feel isolated and alienated on predominantly white campuses (Beckham, 1988; Suen, 1983; Pounds, 1987; Allen, 1987, 1988). In fact, scholars across the country are arguing that racism is more prevalent in today's society than most white Americans are admitting or many social scientists are

documenting (Winkler, 1991).

Much of the existing research focuses on African-American students who are attending or who have dropped out of predominantly white institutions. Studies of African-American students in higher education are concerned with barriers to student success and predictors of attrition (Richardson, Simmons, & de los Santos, 1987; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986). Many researchers have discovered that success in college for African-American students depends more on their personality characteristics, self-concept, goals, motivation, and academic and social support systems than on high school grades or standardized admission tests (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Hughes, 1987). While some studies cite inadequate high school preparation and poor SAT or ACT scores as the primary reasons for the poor success rate of African-American students, these studies also conclude that the negative environment that awaits African-American college students in predominantly white institutions proves to be an impediment to any remedial academic programs that might otherwise improve African-American student performance (Mannan, Charleston, & Saghafi, 1986; Bennett, 1984).

Therefore, it is important to consider variables such as students' attitudes and behaviors, institutional characteristics, and other non-academic factors when attempting to predict college performance outcomes for African-American students (Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987). The conclusion that African-American students drop out for reasons other than academic insufficiency is supported by research findings (Lichtman, Bass, & Ager, 1989; Nettle, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Suen, 1983; Livingston & Stewart, 1987).

African-American Campuses

Allen (1987) describes black colleges and universities as having greater success in graduating African-American students, but, at the same time, describes them as being substandard in terms of financial wealth and academic programs in comparison to white institutions. Research findings in the early 1970's, following the establishment of higher

education desegregation legislation, supported the opinion that African-American students must decide whether to have higher self-esteem and psychological well-being at the expense of a restricted academic environment at a black institution or to have better academic and physical resources at the expense of social isolation at a white institution (Bowles & De Costa, 1971; Sowell, 1972).

According to Hughes (1987), a African-American student's cultural heritage includes continued support from immediate family, extended family, and friends from the home community. The strength of this support, as well as reliance on spiritual strength, plays a vital role in student retention. Reliance on these support systems is encouraged and promoted on historically black campuses.

Enrollment patterns have changed dramatically in the last 40 years for African-American baccalaureate students. Before the desegregation movement of the 1960's, 90 percent of African-American college students went to historically black institutions. Presently, it is estimated that approximately 18 percent of African-American students attend these institutions. Even with the decline in enrollment, a disproportionate number of baccalaureate degrees awarded to African-American students come from historically or predominantly black institutions (Harvey & Williams, 1989).

Historically black colleges and universities seem to have an ability to overcome student weaknesses. In fact, the average profile for students entering a black college or university does not fit Astin's (1975) profile for success. Many student's do not have a strong academic background and are not necessarily from the middle class (Harvey & Williams, 1989). Yet, in spite of these academic and socioeconomic weaknesses, more than ever today's African-American college graduates must be prepared to prove their competencies in graduate school or in the work environment.

Faculty/Student Relations

Increased quality of communication and interaction between faculty members and students has been shown to have a positive effect on students' thought processes,

motivation, and problem-solving skills which are needed to overcome barriers to persistence. By contributing to student satisfaction with specific programs through interaction with students, faculty may help retain students who might otherwise leave college (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Burrell, 1983; Campbell & Davis, 1990; Campbell & Davis, 1996).

According to Massey (1987), white faculty members on white campuses too often "assume that minority students will be inadequate to the task of succeeding in college, and their behavior toward those students is colored by their assumptions" (p.76). While it would appear that the high numbers of African-American faculty mentors on historically/predominantly black campuses would be a contributing factor to the high success rate of African-American students, the literature suggests that white faculty on historically black campuses are as effective as African-American faculty in counseling and advising African-American students (Harvey & Williams, 1989). Allen (1987) reported that "Students on black campuses were nearly twice as likely to claim excellent relations with white faculty (26 percent) compared to students on white campuses" (p. 30). These findings suggest that perhaps the key to the success of African-American students on black campuses is that faculty at these institutions expect success, rather than failure, which is likely to influence students' overall performances.

Nursing Students

An extensive literature search and a telephone interview (Feb. 27, 1991) with Sallie Tucker-Allen, a leading researcher in minority issues in nursing education, suggested that there are no aggregated national data on whether the attrition rate is higher for African-American nursing students at predominantly white institutions than for African-American nursing students at predominantly black institutions. According to Sheila Rodgers (1990), "Minority nursing students at predominantly white colleges may experience psychosocial and academic problems that together influence their decision to remain in the academic system. Estimates of attrition rates for minority nursing students

range from a low of 15 percent to a high of 85 percent". Reasons for high attrition rates for minorities most often identified are academic difficulty, lack of faculty commitment (Tucker-Allen, 1989; Rodgers, 1990) and lack of financial aid (Rosenfeld, 1988; Smith, 1990).

Financial Aid

Because African-American college students most frequently cite the lack of financial resources as the reason for dropping out (Adams & Smith, 1987; Spaights, Kenner, & Dixon, 1987), the impact of financial aid on these students cannot be ignored. Many critics of recent financial aid cutbacks worry that African-Americans and other minority students will be blocked from attaining a college education, making it more difficult for higher education institutions to diversify their student and faculty populations (Wilson, 1991).

Summary

Data regarding African-American nursing student retention has been almost non-existent until the last few years and even recent data is very limited. The related literature concerning African-American students in higher education, however, produced significant findings that can be relevant for African-American nursing students. The primary barriers to African-American student persistence in higher education identified in the literature are inadequate academic and social integration, racism, uncomfortable relationships with faculty, and insufficient financial aid.

## Research Methods

The premise for using qualitative methods in research is that the truth exists as multiple realities based on the perceptions of individual observers and participants (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The focus of student retention research in higher education is to describe and explain how and why students make decisions about completing a bachelor's degree. Since these decisions ultimately have an impact on society and are intertwined with psychological, social, and economic issues, it seems logical that holistic

qualitative methods of inquiry should be utilized (Keller, 1986). As stated by Bryman (1988), "any attempt to understand social reality must be grounded in people's experience of that reality" (p.52).

Instrument

In qualitative design, the researcher, as the interviewer, serves as the research instrument. The accuracy and validity of all of the data collected, recorded, and analyzed, as well as any hypotheses or grounded theory generated depends on the researcher's ability to develop a trusting and open relationship with the study participants. Since interviewer bias is one of the major threats to validity in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), some strategies decribed below were employed to increase the probability that the research findings and interpretations would be credible. The purpose of the study was not to prove or disprove theory but to determine if the data collected corroborated Tinto's and Astin's description of African-American students in higher education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study was collected through a series of in depth interviews spanning a period of 5 months. A total of 8 African-American women were selected as participants, 4 graduates of a predominantly black university in a southeastern state and 4 graduates of a predominantly white university in the same southeastern state. All of the women selected had graduated within the last 2 years and had passed the licensing examination for registered professional nurses. Their ages ranged from 22 to 30. They represented single, divorced, and married women.

Interviews were conducted using both structured and unstructured questions. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interviews, field notes, margin notes, and researcher observation of non-verbal clues formed the data base for the study.

After completion of the first two interviews, the data collected were analyzed, synthesized, and summarized in order to construct a "story" for each participant. The

"stories" included similarities and differences in the participants' backgrounds and college experiences, as well as their individual perceptions of significant factors pertaining to their persistence toward degree completion. The final interview included a "member check" of the data. Each participant read the summarized version of her interview responses and verified its accuracy and/or corrected any errors in interpretation. This gave the researcher another opportunity to ask questions that reinforced findings or filled in information gaps.

Although the qualitative research paradigm required determining the data analysis procedures after data collection, the researcher analyzed the data by constant comparison methods. The information given by each participant in each interview was compared to the information given in that participant's other interviews. Data were also compared among all participants for "alikeness" and "differentness". The research questions were used to anchor the categories into which the data were grouped. Through constant comparison and cross-checking of the data, as well as participant confirmation, the researcher was able to analyze the data for emerging themes, in order to corroborate or contradict the theories of Tinto and Astin to explain African-American student attrition in higher education.

## Findings

The study corroborates Tinto's (1986, 1987) theory in several significant ways. Several of the young women were poorly prepared academically, requiring them to enter college through minority enrichment programs and/or to enroll in remedial classes. All of the participants entered college with poor academic self-concepts, including those who had adequate high school academic preparation. Severely inadequate student advising, lack of role models, and racial bias contributing to "labeling" were listed among the primary reasons for decreased self-esteem.

As proposed by Tinto (1986, 1987), membership in student subcultures played an important role in integrating the participants into the social and academic systems at the

predominantly white university. However, subculture membership was not as vital to survival on the predominantly black campus, primarily because of the nature of the environment.

The biggest factor in determining success was the participants' individual commitments to goal completion, which corroborates Tinto's (1987) contention that individual commitment is central to degree completion. According to Tinto, there are two major forms of individual commitment -- goal and institutional. All of the participants were committed to their personal career goals, although 3 of the graduates of the predominantly white university did not exhibit institutional commitment. However, Tinto (1975) concedes that, if the individual goal commitment is high enough, students may persist to graduation even when the institutional goal commitment is not there.

The only significant way in which the study does not corroborate Tinto's theory is in the area of student financial aid. While Tinto (1987) proposes that student financial aid is not critical to student retention, all 8 study participants report that they would not have enrolled in college or completed degrees without it.

The study corroborates Astin's (1982) theory of student involvement in several ways. The participants were a closer match to Astin's criteria for success than his criteria for failure as evidenced by campus residence, extra-curricular activities, student financial aid, and part-time off-campus employment.

The only major contradiction to Astin's theory was that all 8 of the participants were highly motivated and had a strong commitment to the goal of degree completion, which is in direct contrast to Astin's profile of the typical minority student. It is important to note that the participants of this study were limited to successful graduates, while most studies of minority sudents in the past have focused on those who had dropped out.

## Emerging Themes

As the data were analyzed and synthesized, certain factors related to student persistence to degree completion became apparent and recurrent themes began to emerge.

1. Individual commitment to the goal of degree completion was a major factor in persistence. The participants placed strong emphasis on achieving their career goals in order to have a "better life". This was the key to their high levels of motivation, which kept them involved and connected to their respective universities, in spite of the fact that several of the graduates of the predominantly white university felt alienated on their campus.
2. Adjustment to the college setting was a different experience for those who attended the predominantly black university than for those who attended the predominantly white university. The black campus environment was generally perceived as comfortable, warm, and nurturing, which was in direct contrast to the white campus environment which was generally perceived as cold and uncaring.
3. Satisfaction with the academic experience was related to a combination of factors, which included personal self-esteem, relationships with other students, and pride in their university. Those participants who performed well academically had their self-esteem elevated while those who perceived they were graded lower than their white counterparts had their self-esteem lowered. Friendships with other students was critical to feelings of belonging and overall satisfaction with the college experience for all participants. Pride in their university was very apparent for the graduates of the predominantly black institution, however, only one of the graduates of the predominantly white institution said she was proud to be a graduate of her university.
4. Most of the participants were heavily involved in their studies and participated in selective campus activities during at least part of their time in college. Overall involvement in campus life, however, was more pronounced for the graduates of the predominantly black school.

5. All of the participants worked off-campus at some point while in college, which adds credence to Astin's proposal that working off campus, as long as it is less than 25 hours a week, is instrumental in promoting student persistence. The success of the study participants corroborates Astin's contention that the positive effects are more pronounced for African-American students.

6. Financial aid was identified as a major component of student persistence, which corroborates Astin's theory while contradicting Tinto's assertion that finances are not a major factor in degree completion. While several of the participants listed financial aid as an important consideration in choosing which university to attend, all of them viewed adequate financial aid as essential to persistence. Although Gladieux (1986) proposes that a large amount of student debt has a detrimental effect on minority student enrollment and retention in higher education, these women report no financial burden with repayment of their student loans.

7. Positive role models are important for African-American students for both personal and professional guidance and increased self-esteem. Positive role models were abundant on the predominantly black campus, however, they were scarce on the predominantly white campus.

8. The need for recognition from the faculty was strong for all of the young women. All of the graduates of the predominantly black university reported positive and nurturing relationships with both African-American and white instructors. Only one graduate of the predominantly white university reported positive relationships with all faculty members. Three of the graduates of the predominantly white university reported obvious racist behavior from several instructors, which both hurt and angered them. One reported some positive and some negative relationships with both

African-American and white instructors. She found two nursing instructors, one African-American and one white, to be very nurturing and supportive to her throughout the program. The other two graduates of the white university, however, found only one African-American instructor to be supportive of them. The white instructors and the other African-American instructor seemed cold and uncaring.

9. Anger and bitterness were recurrent themes throughout the study. Racism was the common thread entwined among the feelings of anger and bitterness. The anger of the graduates of the predominantly black university was related to family situations, past experiences in high school and other colleges, and their current work situations. Two of the graduates of the predominantly white university expressed bitterness toward the faculty and students who made them feel alienated and unwelcome. They also were angry about the treatment they are getting in their current work situations. The other two graduates of the predominantly white university did not express any anger or bitterness. They both believe that their life experiences have strengthened them and helped them to grow.

10. The family backgrounds of the study participants were very different, which indicates there is no "typical" family background for successful African-American students. The participants grew up in eight different cities, three of them in other states. Several were raised by both parents and several by single parents - two of them with single fathers. Their parents' educational levels ranged from elementary school to doctoral education. Some of their families encouraged and supported their decision to attend college, while others ridiculed that decision. However, in spite of the differences in their family backgrounds, most of the women had problems with low self-esteem. This suggests that factors other than family

background negatively affected the self-concept of these women.

11. Religion was an important factor for each participant. All of the young women gained strength from their Christian faith.
12. High school guidance counselors were either ineffective, condescending, or intimidating. Only a few of the participants had anything positive to report about their high school counselors. All of them, however, had negative comments.
13. Graduate education is in the future for each study participant. Two are currently enrolled in graduate programs in nursing and pharmacy. Three have plans to earn their master's degrees in nursing and one plans to earn her master's degree in health education. The other two women are unsure in which disciplines they will earn their graduate degrees, although one is sure it will not be in nursing. The graduates of the predominantly black university all received encouragement from their undergraduate faculty to pursue graduate education. However, none of the graduates of the predominantly white university received such encouragement.

## Implications and Recommendations

Higher education institutions, especially predominantly white institutions, are not always successful in meeting the needs of ethnic minority students. Considering the diversity of clients and health care settings, nursing education programs need to be more assertive in addressing this diverse population of students.

Based on the responses of the participants in this study, the following recommendations are made in order that administrators and planners in higher education, especially nursing education, can more effectively meet the needs and improve the quality of the academic experience for minority students.

1. Planners, administrators, and faculty need to recognize that, although minority students have enrolled in higher education for many of the same

reasons as other students, they have different needs, experiences, and backgrounds from majority students. Social and recreational programs need to be developed to serve this student population. Cultural events should be planned that will introduce the art, literature, music, etc. of diverse student populations to the general student body and give minority students a sense of "self".

2. Planners and administrators need to seek the input of minority students and minority community leaders for policy planning and academic program development to meet the needs of minority students. Institutional minority education advisory boards should be established at predominantly white institutions to provide a platform for minority student concerns and issues.
3. Administrators on both predominantly white and predominantly black campuses should develop and support disadvantaged student enrichment programs, especially since African-Americans are disproportionately represented among this student population.
4. Administrators, planners, and faculty need to examine traditional policies, curriculum, and teaching strategies to determine if they are culturally biased.
5. Staff development programs for faculty members and student advisors need to be designed to focus on communication and listening skills, human relations skills, and the needs of diverse student groups. Mentoring programs need to be developed to connect minority students to appropriate role models, African-American or white. Faculty participation should be voluntary and limited to professors with a genuine concern for minority student needs.
6. Administrators should make special efforts to recruit faculty and administrators from minority groups to serve as positive role models for

minority students and examples of minority leadership to non-minority students and personnel.

7. Higher education administrators and nursing school administrators should develop and implement community outreach programs targeted to high school faculty and guidance counselors who serve minority students. These programs should provide information on career opportunities, financial aid packages and scholarships, enrichment programs on campus, and minority student success stories.

8. Administrators and policy-makers need to evaluate the quantity, availability, and accessibility of scholarships, grants, and work-study programs for minority students. Special efforts should be made to provide funding for grants and/or scholarships specifically targeted for minority students in professions, such as nursing, where minorities are underrepresented.

9. Administrators and policy-makers in colleges and schools of education must design curricula to include issues and problems encountered when teaching students from different ethnic backgrounds. Cultural sensitivity should be a basic principle in both teacher and guidance counselor education.

## Suggestions for Further Research

The information presented in this study expands the limited body of literature related to student retention and learning involvement for African-American nursing students. More studies need to be conducted with other African-American nursing graduates of similar institutions in other parts of the country in order to determine whether their perceptions are similar to or different from those of the participants of this study. Studies that employ different types of research methods and larger numbers of participants need to be conducted that would serve to reinforce the validity of the findings

of this study. Also, studies that include African-American male nursing students could be done to determine if there are gender differences in perception, especially since the numbers of males in nursing are steadily increasing. Finally, studies that focus on African-American nursing students at the entry level need to be conducted to determine early perceptions of barriers to persistence and patterns of involvement.

## Summary

The higher education literature has shown that African-American students have always battled prejudice, social isolation, and feelings of loneliness on predominantly white campuses. While the environment is much more comforting and welcoming on predominantly black campuses, there are no national statistics that address whether attrition rates for nursing students on predominantly black campuses are any different from those on predominantly white campuses. The young women in this study refused to take the victim role and have persevered in spite of personal and family barriers, hostile academic environments, generally poor academic preparation, and financial difficulties. The major factors in their success was commitment to their goal and extraordinary determination to succeed. The successful completion of their degrees is a reflection of their strong religious beliefs, their desire for a better life, and their determination to prove to themselves and others that they could succeed.

## References

Adams, E.P., & Smith, B.S. (1987). Factors in student attrition among students at a historically black university. NASPA Journal 24, (3), 33-38.

Allen, W.R. (1987, May African-American /June). Black colleges vs. white colleges. The fork in the road for black students. Change, 28-34.

Allen, W.R. (1988). Improving black access and achievement in higher education. The Review of Higher Education, 11 (4), 403-416.

American Academy of Nursing, Expert Panel on Culturally Competent Nursing

Care. (1992). AAN expert panel report: culturally competent health care. Nursing Outlook, 40 (6), 277-283.

Astin, A.W. (1975). Preventing students from dropping out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A.W. (1977). Four critical years. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A.W. (1982). Minorities in American Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. Journal of College Student Personnel, 25 (4), 297-308.

Beckham, B. (1988). Strangers in a strange land: The experience of blacks on white campuses. Educational Record, 68 (4), 74-78.

Benda, E.J. (1991). The relationship among variables in Tinto's conceptual model and attrition of bachelor's degree nursing students. Journal of Professional Nursing, 7 (1), 16-24.

Bennett, C. (1984). Interracial contact experience and attrition among black undergraduates at a predominantly white university. Theory and Research in Social Education, 12 (2), 19-47.

Bowles, F., & De Costa. (1971). Between two worlds: A profile of Negro higher education. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Boyle, K.K. (1986). Predicting the success of minority students in a baccalaureate nursing. Journal of Nursing Education, 25 (5), 186-192.

Bryman, A. (1988). Quantity and quality in social research. London: Unwin Hyman.

Burrell, L.F., & Trombley, T.B. (1983). Academic advising with minority students on predominantly white campuses. Journal of College Student Personnel, 24 (2), 121-126.

Campbell, A.E., & Davis, S.M. (1990). Enrichment for Academic Success:

Helping at-risk students. Nurse Educator, 15 (6), 33-37.

Campbell, A.E., & Davis, S.M. (1996). Faculty commitment: Retaining minority nursing students in majority institutions. Journal of Nursing education, 35 (7), 298-303.

Donovan, R. (1984). Path analysis of a theoretical model of persistence in higher education among low-income black youth. Research in Higher Education, 21 (3), 243-259.

Dowell, M.A. (1996). Issues in recruitment and retention of minority nursing students. Journal of Nursing Education, 35 (7), 293-297.

Endo, J.J., & Harpel, R.L. (1982). The effect of student-faculty interaction on students' educational outcomes. Research in Higher Education, 16 (2), 115-138.

Firestone, W.A. (1990). Accommodation: Toward a paradigm-praxis dialectic. In E.G. Guba (Ed.), The paradigm dialog (pp.105-124). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Getzlaf, S.B., Sedlacek, G.M., Kearney, K.A., & Blackwell, J.M. (1984). Two types of voluntary undergraduate attrition: Application of Tinto's model. Research in Higher Education, 20 (3), 257-268.

Ginsberg, R., & Bennett, A. (1989). Reform initiatives and minorities in higher education. Education and Urban Society, 21 (3), 245-259.

Gladieux, L.E. (1986). Student financial assistance: Past commitments, future uncertainties. Academe, 72 (6), 9-15.

Green, M.F. (Ed.). (1989). Minorities on campus: A handbook for enhancing diversity. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Guba, E.G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E.G. Guba (Ed.), The paradigm dialog. Newbury Park, CA: Sage publications.

Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1981). Effective Evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harvey, W. B., & Williams, L.E. (1989). Historically black colleges: Models for

increasing minority representation. Education and Urban Society, 21 (3), 328-340.

Hughes, M.S. (1987). Black students' participation in higher education. Journal of College Student Personnel, 28 (6), 532-545.

Jones, W.T. (1987). Enhancing minority-white interactions. In D.J. Wright (Ed.), Responding to the Needs of Today's Minority Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kavanaugh, K.H., Kennedy, P.H., Kohler, H.R., Rasin, J.H., & Schoen, D.C. (1993). Exploring the experiences of African-American students in a School of Nursing. Journal of Nursing education, 32 (6), 273-275.

Keller, G. (1986). Free at last? Breaking the chains that bind education research. The Review of Higher Education 10 (2), 129-134).

Lichtman, C.M., Bass, A.R., & Ager, J.W. (1989). Differences between black and white students in attrition patterns from an urban commuter university. Journal of College Student Development, 30, 4-10.

Livingston, M.D., & Stewart, M.A. (1987). Minority student on a white campus: Perception is truth. NASPA Journal, 24 (3), 39-49.

Mallinckrodt, B., & Sedlacek, W.B. (1987). Student retention and the use of campus facilities by race. NASPA Journal, 24 (3), 28-32.

Mannan, G., Charleston, L., & Saghafi, B. (1986). A comparison of the academic performance of black and white freshman students on an urban commuter campus. Journal of Negro Education, 55 (2), 155-161.

Massey, W.E. (1987, July 15). If we want racially tolerant students, we must have more minority professors. The Chronicle of Higher Education, p.76.

National League for Nursing, Division of Research. (1994). Minority retention in RN education is declining. Nursing Data Source 1994, Vol.I. New York, NY: National League for Nursing Press.

Nettles, M.T., Thoeny, A.R., Gosman, E.J. (1986). Comparative and predictive

analyses of black and white students' college achievement and experiences. The Journal of Higher Education, 57 (3), 289-318.

Pascarella, E.T. (1985). Racial differences in factors associated with bachelor's degree completion: A nine year follow-up. Research in Higher Education, 23 ( 12), 351-373.

Pounds, A.W. (1987). Black students' needs on predominantly white campuses. In D.J. Wright (Ed.), Responding to the Needs of Today's Minority Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Richardson, R.C., Jr., Simmons, H., de los Santos, A.G., Jr. (1987, May/June). Graduating minority students. Lessons from ten success stories. Change, 20-27.

Rodgers, S.G. (1990). Retention of minority nursing students on predominantly white campuses. Nurse Educator, 15 (5), 36-39.

Rosella, J.D., Regan-Kubinski, M.J., & Albrecht, S.A. (1994). The need for multicultural diversity among health professionals. Nursing & Health Care, 15 (5), 242-246.

Rosenfeld, P. (1988, April). Measuring student retention: A national analysis. Nursing & Health Care, 199-202.

Sedlacek, W.E., & Brooks, G.C. (1976). Racism in American education: A model for change. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Smith, V.A. (1990). Nursing student attrition and implications for preadmission advisement. Journal of Nursing Education, 29 (5), 215-218.

Smith, A.W., & Allen, W.R. (1984). Modeling black student academic performance in higher education. Research in Higher Education, 21 (2), 210-225.

Sowell, T. (1972). Black education: The myths and tragedies. New York: McKay.

Spaights, E., Kenner, D., & Dixon, H.E. (1987). The relationship of assertiveness and the academic success of black students in predominantly white institutions of higher education. Psychology, A Quarterly Journal of Human Behavior, 24 (3), 9-13.

Stewart, D.M. (1988). Overcoming the barriers to successful participation by minorities. The Review of Higher Education, 11 (4), 329-336.

Suen, H.K. (1983). Alienation and attrition of black college students on a predominantly white campus. Journal of College Student Personnel, 24 (2), 117-121.

Terenzini, P.T., Pascarella, E.T., Theophilides, C., & Lorang, W.G. (1985). A replication of a path analytic validation of Tinto's theory of college student attrition. The Review of Higher Education, 8 (4), 319-340.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. Review of Educational Research, 45 (1), 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1982). Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. Journal of Higher Education, 53 (6), 687-701.

Tinto, V. (1985). Dropping out and other forms of withdrawal from college. In L. Noel, R. Levitz, D. Saluri, & Associates (Eds.), Increasing Student Retention (pp. 28-43). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tinto, V. (1986). Theories of student departure revisited. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research (pp. 359-384). New York: Agathon Press.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college. Rethinking the causes and cures of student retention. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tucker-Allen, S. (1989). Losses incurred through minority student nurse attrition. Nursing and Health Care, 10 (7), 395-397.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (1992). Statistical Abstract of the United States : 1992 (112th ed.). Washington D.C.: Government printing Office.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1994). Minorities and women

in health fields (DHHS Publication No. HRS-P-DV 94-2). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Voorhees, R.A. (1985). Student finances and campus-based financial aid: A structural model analysis of the persistence of high need freshmen. Research in Higher Education, 22 (1), 65-92.

Wilson, R. (1991, May 1). Some colleges spend millions on merit scholarships: Many weigh cuts in financial aid for needy students. The Chronicle of Higher Education, pp. A27-A29.

Winkler, K.J. (1991, September, 11). While concern over race relations has lessened among whites, sociologists say racism is taking new forms, not disappearing. The Chronicle of Higher Education, pp. A8, A10-A11.